

CHARTER COMMISSION MEETING MINUTES

MONDAY, OCTOBER 25, 2010

705 W. University Avenue, Council Auditorium

Commission members in attendance: Odon Bacque, Dale Bourgeois, Karen Carson, Bruce M Conque, George A. Lewis, Greg Manual, D. Keith Miller, Stephen J. Oats, Aaron Walker

Absent: None

Charter staff members in attendance: Vivian Neumann (Assistant City-Parish Attorney) and Veronica L. Williams (Charter Commission Clerk)

Council Members/Staff in attendance: Council Chair Jay Castille, Council Members Kenneth Patin and Keith Patin, Council Clerk Norma Dugas

Administration staff in attendance: Director of Lafayette Utilities System Terry Huval

(5:30 p.m.) AGENDA ITEM NO. 1: Call to order
Chair George Lewis called the meeting to order.

AGENDA ITEM NO. 2: Invocation and Pledge of Allegiance
Commissioner Stephen Oats was called upon to deliver the invocation and lead the Pledge of Allegiance.

AGENDA ITEM NO. 3: Comments/Announcements from Commission Members.
There were no comments or announcements from the Commission Members.

AGENDA ITEM NO. 4: Further consider and discuss proposals relative to the governance structure of Lafayette Consolidated Government

Lewis stated that he had talked with Legal and a caption would be included on each agenda, which would allow the Commission to vote on preliminary amendments from time to time. With that said, he opened discussion by asking the following question: *"Should the Commission propose that the Charter be amended to provide for a separate body to serve as the governing authority of the City of Lafayette?"*

A motion was offered by Conque, seconded by Oats to identify a preliminary Charter amendment to provide for a separate body (City Council) to serve as the governing authority of the City of Lafayette. Conque noted that the motion would be a preliminary decision to set in place the direction of the Commission with reference to the Charter. Oats added that the Commission would go on to explore other options and could change any preliminary decisions as deliberations continued. Bacque asked for clarification on the motion and Walker responded that a favorable vote would provide the City of Lafayette with its autonomy.

Comments from the public on the motion to identify a preliminary Charter amendment to provide for a separate body (City Council) to serve as the governing authority of the City of Lafayette:

► Jay Castille asked, if the motion passed, what would that mean for the direction of the Commission. Conque stated that these decisions could be changed once more discussion had taken place and details were revealed. The initial votes would provide the board with a starting point. As a sitting City-Parish Council Member, Bacque asked what type of comments Castille heard on Consolidated Government from constituents. Castille

stated that, of the District 2 residents he had talked to, the feedback did not indicate concern about the Consolidated Government; however, there were issues with the current structure of the Lafayette Public Utility Authority (LPUA). Castille favored the Consolidated Government structure. Oats noted that there was a feeling among City residents the City of Lafayette needed to have the ability to govern itself and Castille responded that he had not heard that from his constituents. Oats stated that he felt it was fundamentally unfair that Council Members who represented a majority rural district could control a vote on city issues. Castille reminded that, although the district might be majority rural, the Council Member still represented and was the voice for City constituents in that district. Carson noted that the City should not be portrayed as a victim as they had voted in favor of Consolidation. Oats advised that he too had supported Consolidation and reminded that the unintended consequences of the current form of government were reasons that the sitting Charter Commission was formed.

In closing, Castille requested that the Commission add language to the Charter that revisions be assessed every eight (8) years. Bourgeois noted that the current Council meetings dealt largely with a majority of City ordinances; and this number would not decrease after reapportionment. Castille reminded that the census data was not anticipated until March 2011 and the completion of reapportionment around mid summer. Manuel stated that the population and annexations within the City of Lafayette had not gone in a positive direction, so that changed how city residents viewed Consolidation.

► Bernell Bernard reminded that people in the unincorporated area voted against Consolidation. She felt that the proposal to Consolidate was crammed down their throats. Furthermore, she felt it was not the place of the Commission to address the funding issue. The small towns did not want to be a part of Consolidated Government, but she felt they were getting the recognition every time the words “entire parish” were used. In her opinion, Consolidation has been wrong since it was placed on the ballot, as the City government was eliminated.

► Wallace Senegal – noted that inner City Council members should get their fair share of the pie. The choice should be placed on the ballot to give the voters the option on whether there should be a City of Lafayette.

Upon vote on the motion by Conque, seconded by Oats **to identify a preliminary Charter amendment to provide for a separate body (City Council) to serve as the governing authority of the City of Lafayette**, the vote was as follows:

YEAS: Bourgeois, Carson, Conque, Lewis, Manuel, Miller, Oats, Walker

NAYS: Bacque

ABSENT: None

ABSTAIN: None

The motion was approved

Lewis then asked the question: *“What should the City Council’s composition be insofar as the number of members?”*

Oats suggested that there be a mayor for the City of Lafayette and a Council with nine (9) or seven (7) members. It was his opinion that a five (5) member Council would be too small. Conque concurred with Oats. Bacque expressed concern about the ability to get citizen support on the proposal, when the preliminary amendment would grow government and increase costs. The proposal would be difficult to sell to the public.

Lewis reminded that he had selected the governance option that would provide for a City Council, with everything else under the current structure remaining status quo. This, he felt, would be the simplest structure to implement. Further, he concurred with Conque's statement that more members would allow for better concentration on constituents; thus he would consider a 7-member body. Carson concurred, adding that more Council representation might provide more power over the mayor. Oats stated that a 9-member body would be large enough for the Council to create sub-committees.

Referring to a Parish Council, Conque suggested that it be a 9-member body that would meet once a month. The Council would have discretion on whether to choose to enter into an intergovernmental agreement to provide the services/functions for the government. There would not be a need for a Parish President, as the Chairman of the Parish Council would act as the executive officer for the parish. Bacque asked if the Parish Council would be paid and Conque responded affirmatively. Oats suggested the possibility of a volunteer Parish Council. Bacque advised that the higher number of Council members could be the deciding factor among citizens who wanted a reason to oppose the proposal. A smaller Council could be more efficient, with less of a cost impact.

Lewis reminded that the motion and issue of consideration were related to whether to provide for a City mayor and the number of Council members. Manuel would consider an independent utility board and favored a 7-member body. Further, it was his opinion that the Consolidated services/functions should remain as is. Carson was against Council sub-committees stating that they met behind closed doors. Oats then made the motion, seconded by Walker to identify a preliminary Charter amendment to provide for a mayor for the City of Lafayette and a 7-member City Council.

Bacque questioned whether costs associated with the various structures would be determined and Lewis stated that costs would come prior to a final vote and as the Commission moved deeper into structures. Walker emphasized that the Commission should be concerned about the governance structure and once the governance structure was determined, the Commission could get more specifics on draft proposals/amendments. Carson reminded that any proposal should be clear and precise when presented to the public.

A motion was offered by Manuel, seconded by Walker **to call for the question**, and the vote was as follows:

YEAS: Carson

NAYS: Bacque, Bourgeois, Conque, Lewis, Manuel, Miller, Oats, Walker

ABSENT: None

ABSTAIN: None

The motion was failed.

Comments from the public on the motion to identify a preliminary Charter amendment to provide for a mayor for the City of Lafayette and a 7-member City Council:

► Kenneth Boudreaux – stated that there was a need for a full time executive for the Parish or a full time manager. With reference to membership of the Council, he favored a 9-member body for both the city and parish as Council representatives would be able to better service their districts. As a representative, he did not hear negative feedback on growing government, but more on the need for better access to services.

Upon vote on the motion by Oats, seconded by Walker **to identify a preliminary Charter amendment to provide for a mayor for the City of Lafayette and a 7-member City Council**, the vote was as follows:

YEAS: Bacque, Bourgeois, Carson, Conque, Lewis, Manuel, Miller, Oats, Walker

NAYS: None

ABSENT: None

ABSTAIN: None

The motion was unanimously approved

AGENDA ITEM NO. 5: General comments from the public on Consolidation

There were no additional comments from the public.

AGENDA ITEM NO. 6: Next meeting date was scheduled for November 1, with there being further discussion on the governance structure and a presentation by the Legal Department. Oats asked if it would be in order to request that University of Louisiana at Lafayette Political Science Professor Pearson Cross attend the next meeting to provide information on a strong council/weak mayor structure of government. Lewis stated that he would place Dr. Cross on the agenda when it was confirmed that he could attend.

AGENDA ITEM NO. 7: Adjourn

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 7:10 p.m.